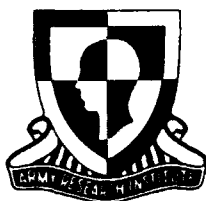


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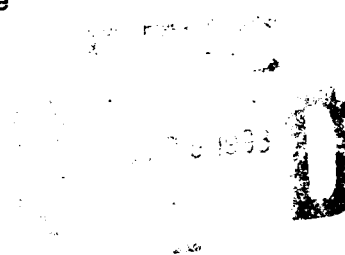


U.S. Army Research Institute  
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

Research Report 1646

# Prior Service Soldiers in the Special Forces Assessment and Selection Program: Recruitment Issues

Elizabeth J. Brady and Judith E. Brooks  
U.S. Army Research Institute



October 1993

*SEP* 93-28854

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE 1993, October	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Final Jan 92 - Jun 92		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Prior Service Soldiers in the Special Forces Assessment and Selection Program: Recruitment Issues		5. FUNDING NUMBERS 63007A 792 1223 H01		
6. AUTHOR(S) Brady, Elizabeth J.; and Brooks, Judith E.				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences ATTN: PERI-RS 5001 Eisenhower Avenue Alexandria, VA 22333-5600		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER ARI Research Report 1646		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) --		10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER --		
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES --				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE --		
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) <p>The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) requested assistance from the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) to examine the performance of Prior Service candidates in the Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) program. The purpose of the research was to inform decisions about the future recruitment of Prior Service soldiers for SFAS. In particular, USAJFKSWCS was interested in the likely impact of three proposed eligibility restrictions on the market of available candidates and on select rates in SFAS. Researchers analyzed data from enlisted candidates who participated in SFAS classes between January 1991 and March 1992.</p> <p>The findings showed that Prior Service candidates generally performed as well as Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve in SFAS, but had a higher rate of prerequisite swim failures. The data supported a proposed restriction on Prior Service soldiers with no combat arms experience, but other proposed restrictions concerning former branch of service and length of separation from Active Duty were not supported by performance data.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Continued)</p>				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Special Forces Prior Service program		18x program Recruiting		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 36
				16. PRICE CODE --
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unlimited	

13. ABSTRACT (Continued)

Application of all of the proposed restrictions would have eliminated about two thirds of all Prior Service candidates in the sample. These findings and other considerations, such as Special Forces manpower requirements and Prior Service program administrative costs, will help Army leaders make informed decisions about the future of the program as a recruitment tool for Special Forces.

**Research Report 1646**

**Prior Service Soldiers in the Special Forces  
Assessment and Selection Program:  
Recruitment Issues**

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Department of the Army

**October 1993**

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**Army Project Number**  
**2Q263007A792**

**Manpower and Personnel**

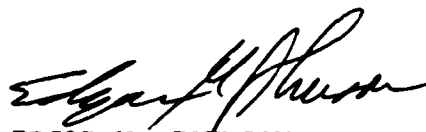
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## FOREWORD

The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) and the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) are engaged in a cooperative research program to identify, recruit, assess, select, train, and utilize Special Forces personnel. The research described in this report is part of that ongoing program. This particular effort, which was conducted at the request of the USAJFKSWCS, examines recruitment issues for personnel who enter Special Forces through the Prior Service (18X) program.

The Leadership and Organizational Change and the Selection and Classification Technical Areas of ARI's Manpower and Personnel Research Division conducted the research as part of the advanced development program. Support for this and other efforts to help meet Special Forces' need for highly qualified personnel is documented in a June 1991 Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Army Special Operations Command and the ARI.

This research compared the characteristics and performance outcomes of Prior Service candidates in the Special Forces Assessment and Selection program (SFAS) to those of soldiers from the Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve components. It also assessed the likely impact of recently proposed restrictions on Prior Service eligibility. The findings were briefed, in part, to the USAJFKSWCS and the U.S. Army Recruiting Command in March 1992.



EDGAR M. JOHNSON  
Director

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The authors wish to thank Martha L. Teplitzky of the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) for her database expertise, time, and support for this project. Special thanks also go to Michelle M. Zazanis of ARI for her time in working with the database. The authors particularly wish to thank Sergeant First Class Michael C. Curtis, Special Forces Recruiting Liaison, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for his support, encouragement, and devotion to this project.

**PRIOR SERVICE SOLDIERS IN THE SPECIAL FORCES ASSESSMENT AND  
SELECTION PROGRAM: RECRUITMENT ISSUES**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**Requirement:**

The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) conducts the Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) program and Special Forces (SF) qualification training. The USAJFKSWCS staff requested an analysis of data on Prior Service candidates to assess their background characteristics and SFAS performance outcomes. The findings were to be used to make decisions about the recruitment and eligibility of Prior Service soldiers for SFAS.

**Procedure:**

ARI researchers analyzed data from two samples of enlisted candidates from SFAS classes conducted between January 1991 and March 1992. The first sample allowed comparisons between Prior Service soldiers and soldiers from the Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve components. Researchers obtained additional background data on Prior Service soldiers for the second sample. This sample was used to assess the impact of proposed Prior Service eligibility restrictions on the potential market and select rates of Prior Service candidates.

**Findings:**

Prior Service candidates generally performed as well as their Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve counterparts in SFAS, although they had a higher rate of prerequisite swim failures. Application of all proposed eligibility restrictions to our sample eliminated about two thirds of all Prior Service candidates. SFAS performance data did not support all of the proposed restrictions on Prior Service program eligibility, namely, restrictions on Air Force and Navy candidates and on soldiers with more than 2 years of separation from Active Duty. The restrictions were proposed primarily because it was anticipated that these people would have trouble in the Special Forces Qualification Course. The data did, however, support the proposed restriction on soldiers with no combat arms experience because these candidates were less likely to be selected.



### Utilization of Findings:

The research findings help to inform decisions about the future of the Prior Service program as a recruitment mechanism for Special Forces. They provide information about the performance of Prior Service soldiers in SFAS relative to other candidates. Additionally, they help assess specific eligibility restrictions that could affect the market of available Prior Service candidates and their success rates in SFAS.

**PRIOR SERVICE SOLDIERS IN THE SPECIAL FORCES ASSESSMENT AND  
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PRIOR SERVICE SOLDIERS IN THE SPECIAL FORCES  
ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION PROGRAM:  
RECRUITMENT ISSUES

Introduction

Background

The Special Forces Prior Service program, also known as the 18X Program, was established in 1990 by the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC). Under this program, Prior Service soldiers who have separated from any of the armed services and who meet certain qualifications are eligible for incentives to reenlist in Army Special Forces (SF). USAREC proposed the program as a means of expanding the potential SF market. The SF recruiting mission increased from 1989 to 1991, while simultaneous downsizing in the rest of the Army reduced the active-duty eligible pool for SF. Thus, there was a perceived need for market expansion to meet the SF recruiting mission.

The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) agreed to the program on a temporary basis with the understanding that USAREC would limit Prior Service recruitment to no more than 20% of the year's mission for the Special Forces Assessment, and Selection (SFAS) program. USAREC also agreed to support Prior Service soldiers who attend a 2-week Pre-SFAS training program.<sup>1</sup> In Fiscal Year (FY) 91, 15% of all enlisted SFAS candidates were Prior Service, and the percentage grew to about 20% in FY92.

Recently, USAJFKSWCS and USAREC began to reconsider the Prior Service program in view of current recruitment needs. After a period of expansion, SF authorizations are now approaching sustainment levels. As a result, the recruiting mission is being reduced (Herd & Teplitzky, 1992), allowing USAJFKSWCS and USAREC to be more selective about personnel applying for SF. USAJFKSWCS has suggested reducing the number of 19X soldiers recruited and imposing more selective prerequisites for Prior Service soldiers (as well as for other applicants).

Several relevant factors influence decisions about the recruitment of 18X soldiers for SFAS. Some factors are administrative, such as the availability of funding for Pre-SFAS. Other factors have more to do with the characteristics of Prior Service personnel that affect their suitability for SFAS and the qualification course. Prior Service soldiers come to SFAS with diverse backgrounds and experiences that make them a unique asset. On the other hand, those who were never in the Army or

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<sup>1</sup>SFAS is a 21-day program designed to select soldiers for SF qualification training. It assesses individuals for physical fitness, effort, ability to cope with stress, leadership qualities, and ability to work in teams. Pre-SFAS covers the basic skills (e.g., ruckmarching techniques), attitude development, and physical fitness needed for success in SFAS.

were separated years ago lack the basic Army skills (e.g., land navigation, rucksack marching) that are required of all candidates for success in SFAS and the qualification course. The challenge for decision makers is to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of Prior Service recruiting.

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide information that USAJFKSWCS and USAREC can use to make policy decisions about Prior Service program participation. The information is based on descriptive analyses that ARI performed on data from Prior Service and other candidates who participated in the SFAS program in FY91 and FY92. An initial set of analyses help document how Prior Service soldiers compare with their Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve counterparts on background characteristics and SFAS outcomes. These analyses are based on data from the first eight classes in which Prior Service soldiers were allowed to participate. A second set of analyses focus on the impact of specific proposed restrictions on Prior Service soldiers that would limit eligibility for SFAS. The restrictions, proposed in Spring 1992, would:

- limit participation to former Army and Marine Corps soldiers, considering Air Force and Navy applicants only on a case-by-case basis.
- limit participation to Combat Arms Military Occupational Specialties (MOS), Career Management Field (CMF) 31 (Signal Operations), and CMF 91 (Medical); consider non-combat arms applications only if the individual is Ranger-qualified.
- limit the amount of time separated from Active Duty to 24 months.

ARI researchers projected the impact of these restrictions on the market of eligible Prior Service SFAS candidates using data from five recent classes. We also examined whether the restrictions would, as intended, have increased the success rate of Prior Service SFAS candidates, had they been imposed on these classes. We were not able to assess the impact of the proposed restriction on the second outcome of interest, success in the Special Forces Qualification Course.

### Research Approach

#### Description of Samples

There were two research samples drawn from SFAS classes conducted in FY91 and FY92. Both samples included enlisted soldiers only. The first consisted of eight classes that were

conducted in FY91. This sample allowed us to compare Prior Service to Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve components for the first full year in which Prior Service soldiers attended SFAS. The eight FY91 classes, 3-91 through 502-91, included a total of 2,364 enlisted candidates. There were 1,625 Active Duty candidates, 410 National Guard/Reserve, and 329 Prior Service. Table 1 shows the breakdown of Prior Service candidates by class.

Table 1

Enlisted Prior Service Candidates in SFAS Classes 3-91 Through 502-91

---

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>CLASS</u>	<u>N</u>
JAN	3-91	11
FEB	4-91	11
MAR	501-91	21
APR	5-91	51
MAY	6-91	85
JUN	7-91	74
SEP	8-91	22
SEP/OCT	502-91	<u>54</u>
TOTAL		329

---

The second sample included only enlisted Prior Service candidates from five SFAS classes, 502-91 through 501-92. For these five classes, we had obtained additional background data on the Prior Service candidates that allowed us to analyze the impact of the proposed 18X eligibility restrictions. This sample consisted of 307 Prior Service candidates in all, and Table 2 shows their breakdown by class.

Table 2

Enlisted Prior Service Candidates in SFAS Classes 502-91 Through 501-92

---

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>CLASS</u>	<u>N</u>
SEP/OCT	502-91	54
NOV	2-92	64
JAN	3-92	39
FEB	4-92	73
MAR	501-92	<u>77</u>
TOTAL		307

---

## Data and Analyses

The first set of analyses compared Prior Service candidates to Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve candidates on background characteristics and SFAS outcomes. The data used in these analyses came from the ARI-USAJFKSWCS FY91 SFAS database (classes 3-91 through 502-91) which contains military and personal demographic information plus SFAS performance and outcome data on all candidates.

The second set of analyses addressed only Prior Service candidates in SFAS classes 502-91 through 501-92. For these candidates, we had information on the background variables that corresponded to the eligibility requirements being considered by USAJFKSWCS and USAREC. The data for these analyses came from the ARI-USAJFKSWCS FY91 and FY92 SFAS databases, class rosters, and Prior Service Inprocessing Forms. We used the SFAS databases and class rosters to determine SFAS outcomes (e.g., prerequisite drop, selected, voluntary withdrawal, board-nonselected). Using the Prior Service Inprocessing Form, we determined the candidate's former branch of service, former MOS, and length of separation from Active Duty (see Appendix A for a copy of this form).



## Results

### Prior Service Compared to Active/Guard/Reserve

**Background Characteristics.** For the FY91 classes, we compared Prior Service candidates to Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve on demographic and background variables such as age, General Technical (GT) score, Wonderlic score, and years of education. The differences across groups on these variables were negligible.

In particular, we examined the number of Ranger-qualified candidates in each component, since USAJFKSWCS and USAREC have considered Ranger qualification as a potential screening variable for Prior Service personnel. Figure 1 shows that 9% of Prior Service candidates were Ranger-qualified compared to 12% for Active Duty and 9% for National Guard/Reserve.

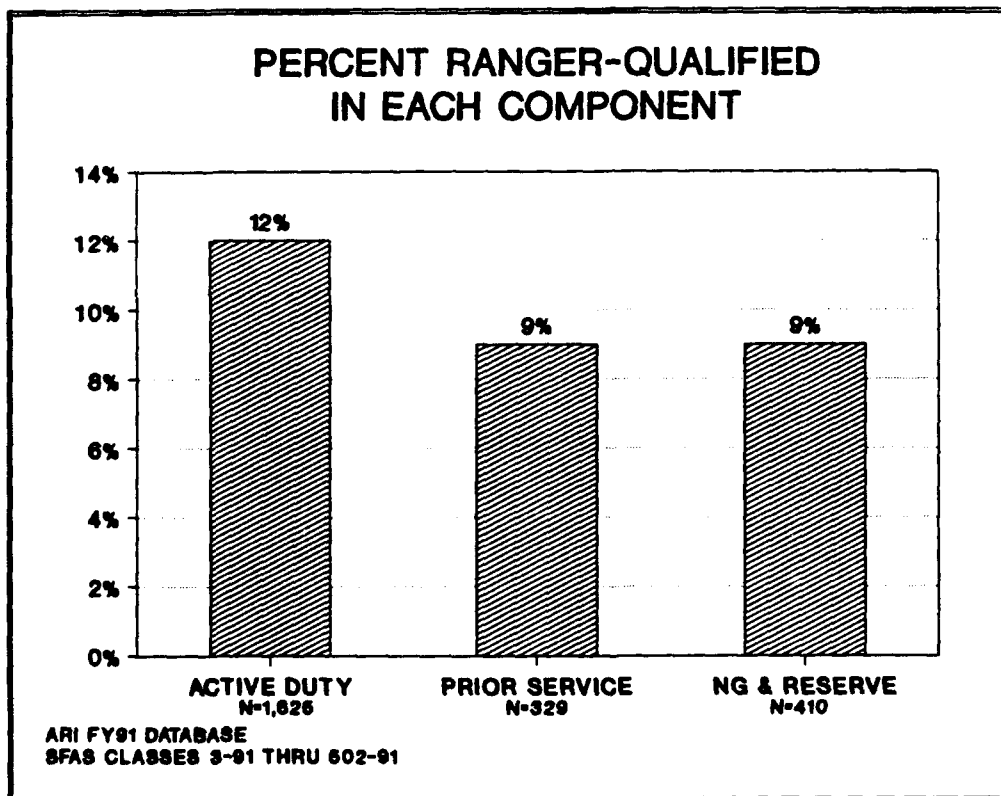


Figure 1. Percent Ranger-qualified in each component (SFAS classes 3-91 through 502-91, enlisted only).

**SFAS Outcomes.** We next compared the three groups on SFAS outcomes. A major outcome of interest is the percent of candidates selected for Special Forces training. Figure 2 shows the select rates for Prior Service, Active Duty, and National Guard/Reserve across the FY91 classes. These rates are based on the number of candidates reporting to Camp Mackall, excluding prerequisite failures who are typically not counted in SFAS official statistics. As shown in the figure, Prior Service select rates varied considerably across classes from a low of about 27% in class 3-91 to a high of about 54% in 502-91. The Prior Service select rates were neither consistently higher nor consistently lower than the select rates for Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve.

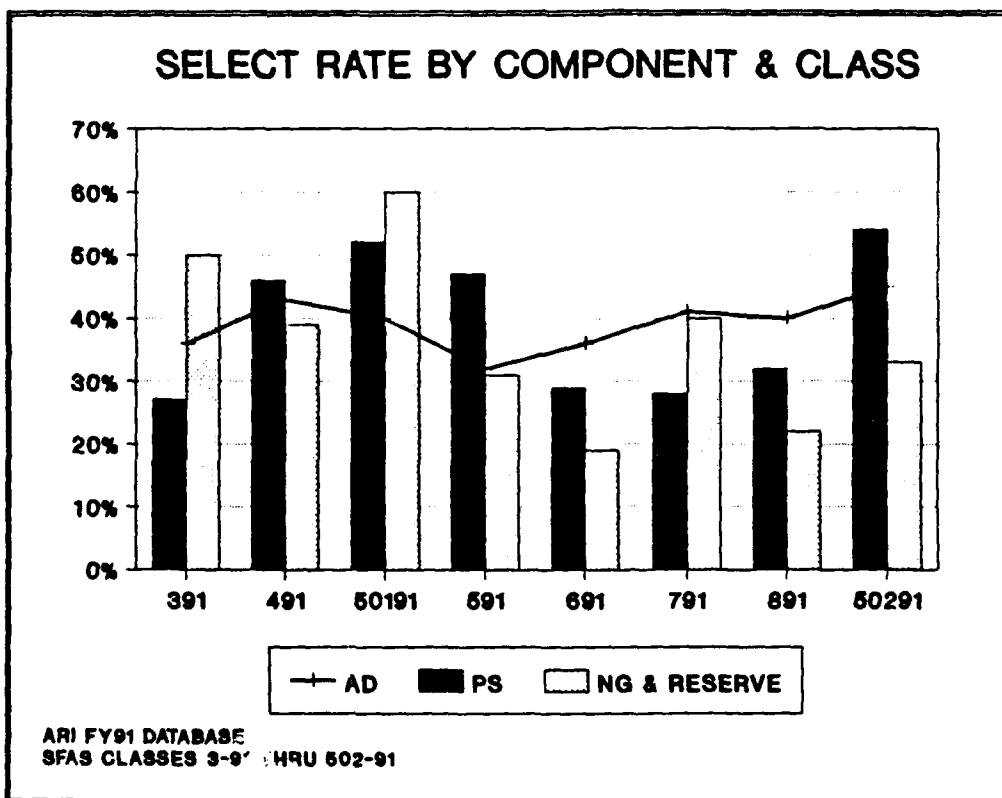


Figure 2. Select rate by component and class (SFAS classes 3-91 through 502-91, enlisted only).

We then combined all classes to examine differences across components in the percent of prerequisite drops, nongraduates, and graduates. The data are shown in Figure 3. All of the percentages are based on the total number of soldiers reporting to Fort Bragg for SFAS. A prerequisite drop is defined as a failure on the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT), or the swim test, or a failure on both. Nongraduates are defined as soldiers who passed the prerequisites but were otherwise not selected, and graduates are those selected for training.

Figure 3 shows that Prior Service had the highest prerequisite drop rate at 20% compared to Active Duty (11%) and National Guard/Reserve (17%). Their high prerequisite drop rate partly offsets their relatively low percent of nongraduates. Over all classes, the select rate for Prior Service was lower than for Active Duty but higher than for National Guard/Reserve.

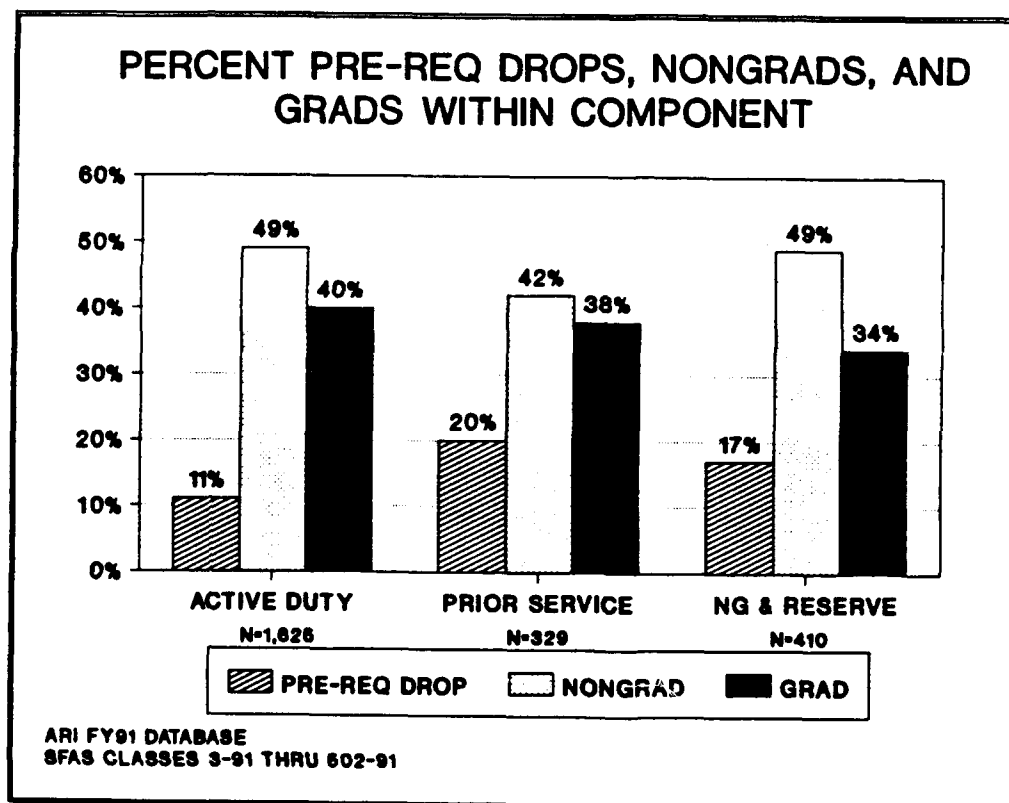


Figure 3. Percent of prerequisite drops, nongraduates, and graduates in each component (SFAS classes 3-91 through 502-91, enlisted only).

We examined the prerequisite drop rates further by separately analyzing APFT and swim test failures. Figure 4 shows the breakdown by component. Prior Service candidates clearly had the highest rate of swim test failures (6%). Their 12% failure rate on the APFT was also high compared to Active Duty (7%) but somewhat lower than the APFT failure rate for National Guard/Reserve candidates (14%). The percent of candidates who failed both the APFT and the swim test was equal across components.

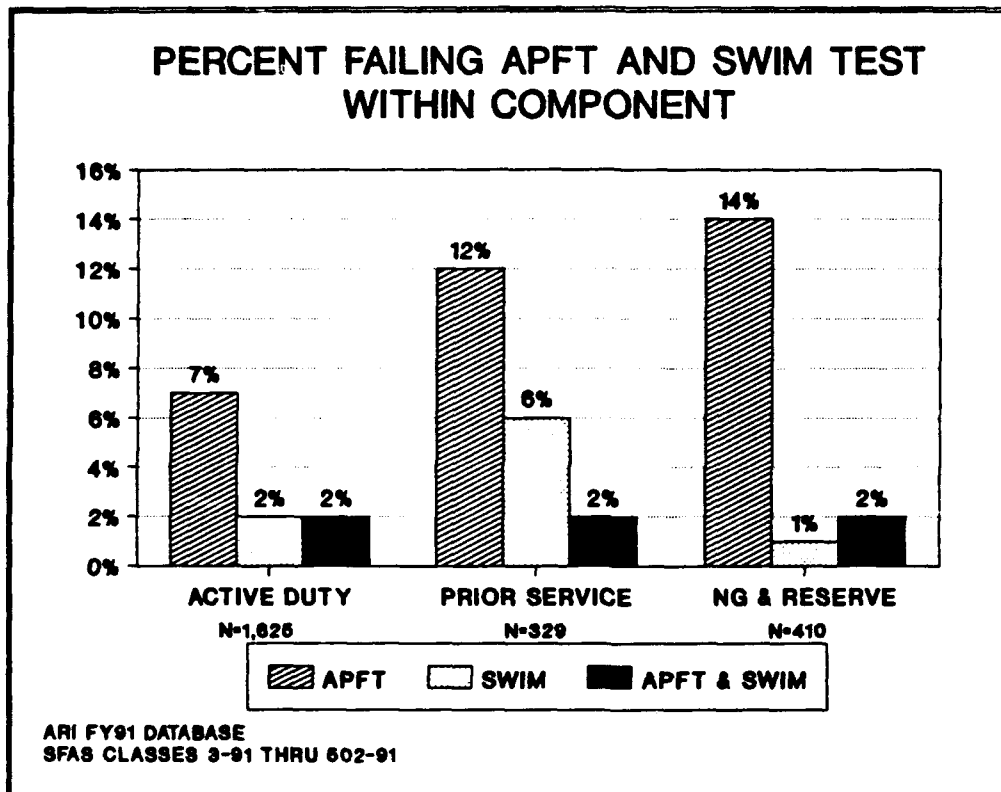


Figure 4. Percent failing APFT and swim test within component (SFAS classes 3-91 through 502-91, enlisted only).

Next, we compared the reasons for nonselection across groups. Figure 5 shows the percent of candidates by component who were nonselected for specific reasons. The data are based only on those candidates who were nonselected, excluding candidates who graduated and those who failed prerequisites. Board drops reflect the combined number of drops by both the first and second SFAS boards. The percent of voluntary withdrawals is the percent of candidates who voluntarily withdrew from SFAS after day four. The percent of drops due to injury reflects the percent of candidates who sustained an injury at any point during SFAS and dropped for that reason. Miscellaneous reasons (e.g., medically disqualified) are represented by "other".

Figure 5 shows that Prior Service candidates had the lowest percent of board drops (24%) and reported injuries (12%) compared to Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve. Prior Service candidates had a higher percent of voluntary withdrawals than National Guard/Reserve but lower than Active Duty. Sixteen percent of Prior Service candidates were not selected due to miscellaneous reasons as compared to 6% of Active Duty and 10% of National Guard/Reserve candidates.

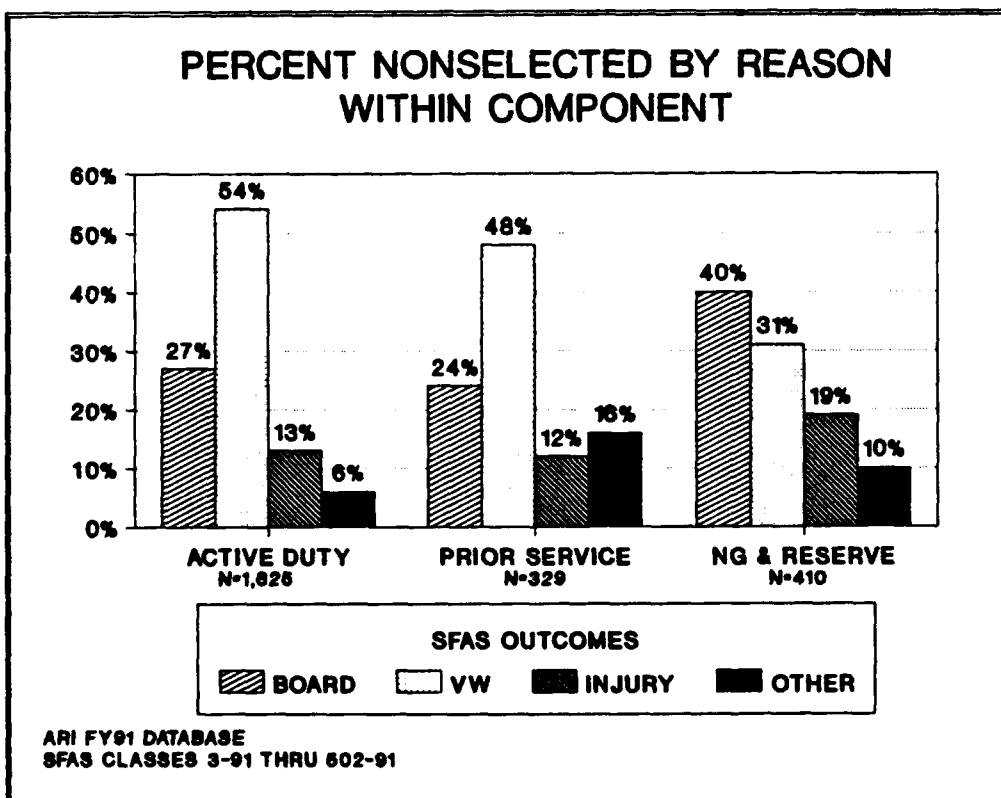


Figure 5. Percent nonselected by reason within component (SFAS classes 3-91 through 502-91, enlisted only).

### Prior Service Candidate Backgrounds and SFAS Outcomes

The results described next are based on the data from Prior Service candidates enrolled in SFAS classes 502-91 through 501-92. We first describe their background characteristics and then examine the relationship of selected background variables to SFAS outcomes. The results suggest how the proposed Prior Service program restrictions might affect both the number of eligible candidates and SFAS selection rates.

Background Characteristics. Table 3 shows the number and percent of Prior Service candidates by their former branch of service. In our sample, most candidates (80%) had previously served in the Army. If the proposed Army/Marine Corps restriction had been applied to these classes, 28 Navy and Air Force candidates (9% of the total) would have been excluded.

Table 3

Number and Percent of Prior Service Candidates by Former Branch of Service in SFAS Classes 502-91 Through 501-92, Enlisted Only

PRIOR SERVICE	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
ARMY	246	(80%)
MARINE CORPS	33	(11%)
NAVY	15	( 5%)
AIR FORCE	13	( 4%)
TOTAL	307	100%

We also looked at combat arms experience, limiting the analysis to Army and Marine Corps candidates.<sup>2</sup> Figure 6 shows that about half of the Prior Service Army candidates had combat arms experience, compared to about three quarters of the Marines. Overall, 53% of Army and Marine Corps candidates had combat arms experience.

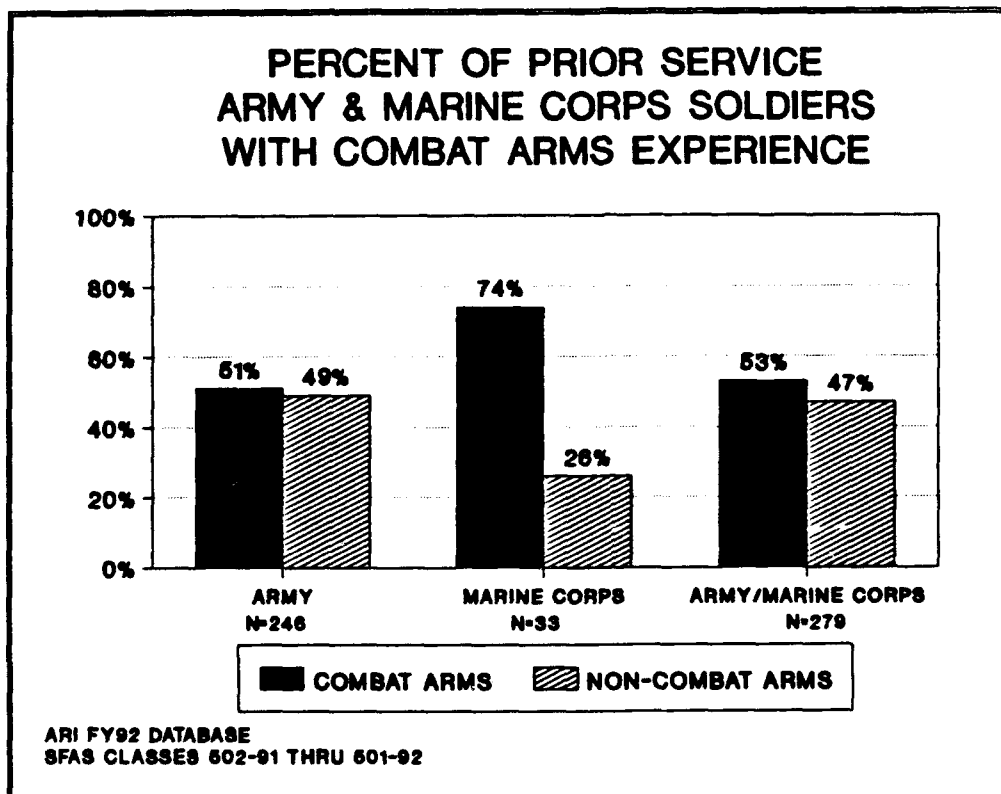


Figure 6. Percent of Prior Service Army and Marine Corps soldiers with combat arms experience (SFAS classes 502-91 through 501-92, enlisted only).

<sup>2</sup>Navy and Air Force candidates were not included, because they were few in number, and because the data on the inprocessing form did not allow an accurate determination of combat arms experience in all cases.

In view of the proposal to accept only Prior Service candidates from combat arms or from CMF 31 (Signal Operations) and CMF 91 (Medical) feeder MOS, we also examined the number of candidates who fell into these categories. Figure 7 describes this breakdown for Army candidates. In addition to the 51% with combat arms experience, another 14% had experience in either CMF 31 or CMF 91. Thus, over one third of the Army Prior Service candidates did not fall into one of the desirable MOS experience categories and would have been eliminated had this restriction been applied to our sample.

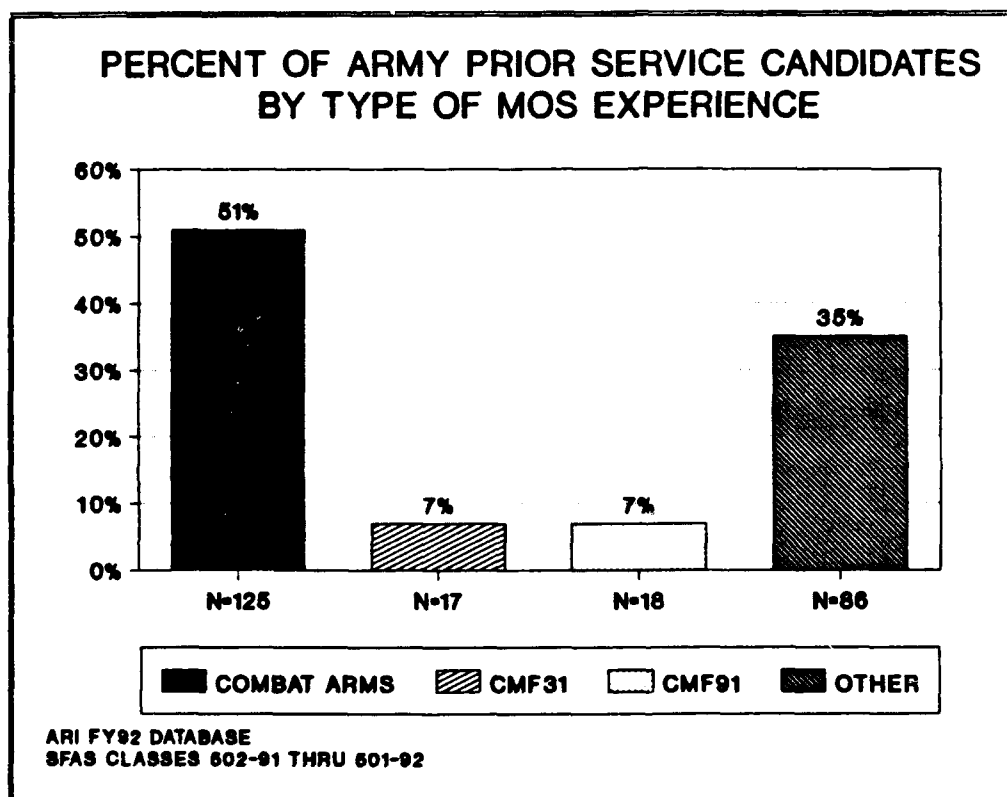


Figure 7. Percent of Army Prior Service candidates by type of MOS experience (SFAS classes 502-91 through 501-92, enlisted only).

Lastly, we examined the length of time that candidates had been separated from Active Duty. The data for this analysis came from Question 5 on the Prior Service Inprocessing Form (Appendix A) which asked, "How long were you out of the military?" Initial



inspection of these data and consideration of the question wording revealed a problem of data interpretation. About 6% (N=19) of the candidates reported zero months separation from the military due to their participation in the National Guard or Reserve components after Active Duty. For these candidates, we were unable to determine their length of separation from Active Duty, treated their data as missing, and excluded them from subsequent analysis. For the remaining 94% (N=288) of the candidates, we determined the percent who fell within various separation intervals.

Figure 8 shows that 27% of the candidates had been separated for a year or less. About 61% of the candidates had been separated for no more than 2 years. Thus, if SFAS participation had been restricted to soldiers with no more than 2 years of separation, 39% of the candidates in this sample would have been excluded.

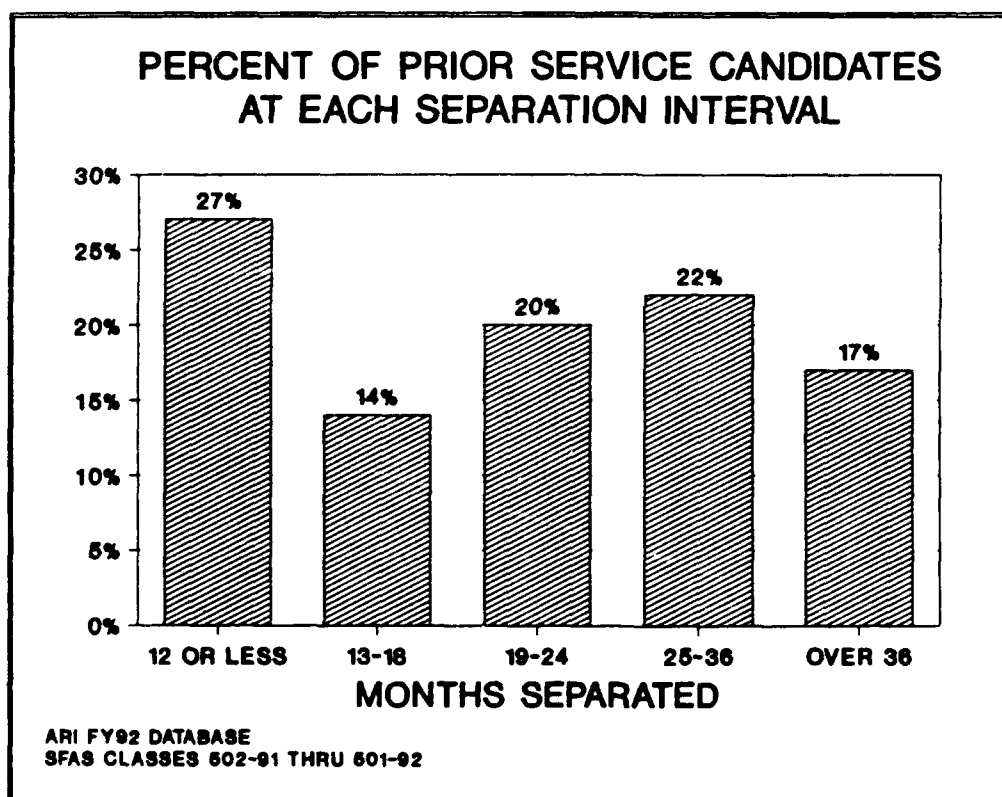


Figure 8. Percent of Prior Service candidates at each separation interval (SFAS classes 502-91 through 501-92, enlisted only).

**SFAS Outcomes.** The first analysis of SFAS outcomes compared candidates by former service branch. Because so few had previously served in the Air Force or Navy, we combined these soldiers into one category. Figure 9 shows the percent of prerequisite drops, nongraduates, and graduates (selectees) within the three service groups. The number of soldiers from the different services varied widely, with prior Army soldiers (N=246) far outnumbering soldiers from the Marine Corps (N=33) and Air Force/Navy (N=28).

Based on this sample, Figure 9 shows that the Marines performed relatively well with the fewest prerequisite drops and the highest graduation rate. Former Army soldiers had the lowest graduation rate at 40%. Air Force and Navy servicemen had a slightly better graduation rate (43%) for this small sample and had the highest rate of prerequisite drops.

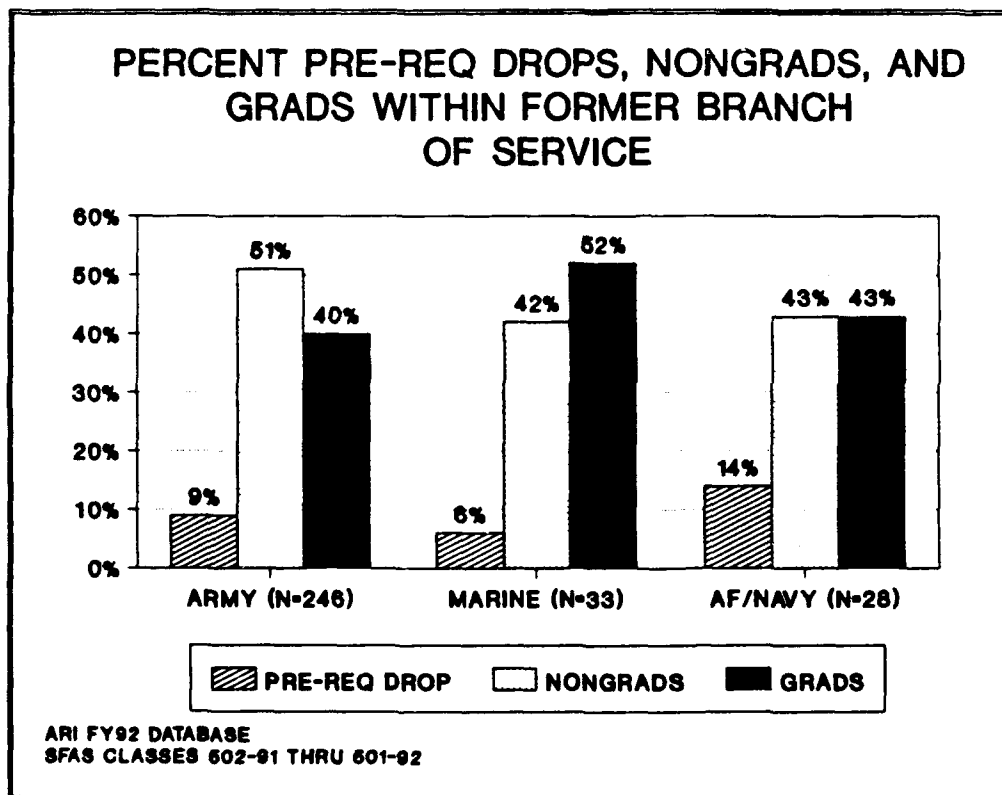


Figure 9. Percent of prerequisite drops, nongraduates, and graduates within each service (SFAS classes 502-91 through 501-92, enlisted only).

**Combat Arms Experience.** Next, we examined the impact of combat arms experience on select rates. We limited this analysis to Army and Marine Corps candidates, since their type of military experience could be readily determined. Figure 10 shows the result. Both Army and Marine Corps candidates with combat arms experience had higher select rates than those without. Moreover, the difference was especially pronounced for Marines. The combined Army and Marine data showed a 50% select rate for prior combat arms soldiers versus a 33% select rate for soldiers with no combat arms experience.

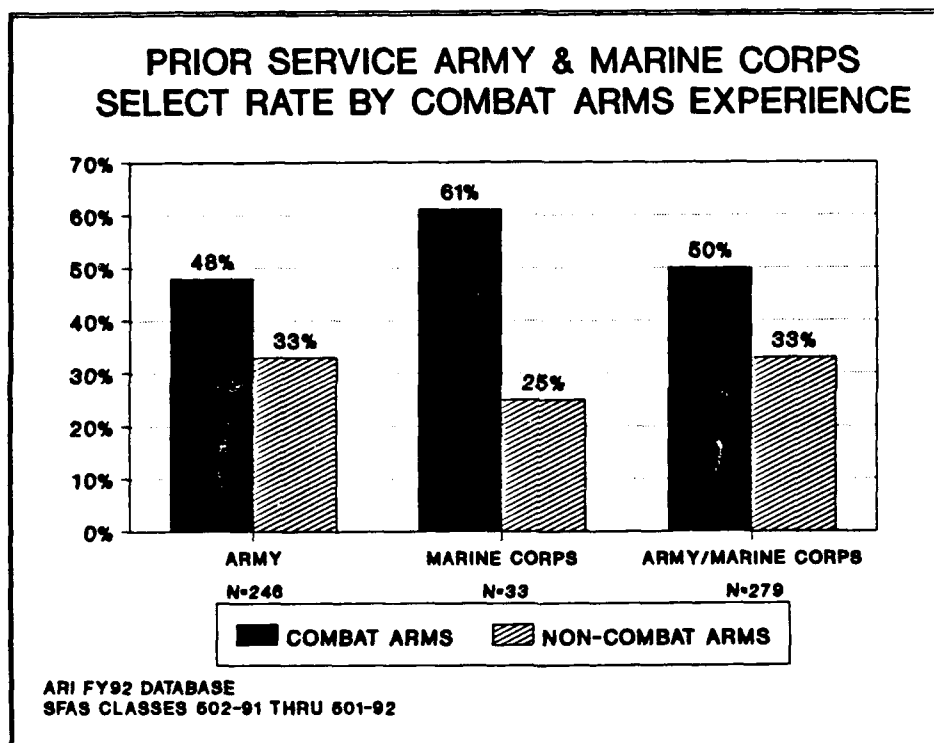


Figure 10. Prior Service Army and Marine Corps select rate by combat arms experience (SFAS classes 502-91 through 501-92, enlisted only).

We also considered select rates for soldiers with signal operations and medical (CMF 31 and CMF 91) experience, since USAJFKSWCS and USAREC exempted them from the proposed combat arms restriction. The select rates for CMF 31 (n=17) and CMF 91 (n=18) were 41% and 22%, respectively. Because these select rates are based on so few people, they should be interpreted with great caution.

**Separation Time.** We then examined length of time separated from Active Duty in relation to success in SFAS. The proposed restriction would limit SFAS participation to Prior Service soldiers with no more than 24 months of separation, based on the hypothesis that soldiers with shorter separation intervals perform better in SFAS. We therefore considered 1-24 months and over 24 months as critical categories. In addition, we examined the potential impact of an even stricter criterion that would limit participation to those with a separation interval of 18 months or less.

Figure 11 shows that the select rates are identical across categories. As the criterion is relaxed from 18 or fewer months to include those with up to 24 months of separation, the select rate does not decrease but rather remains the same. Moreover, there is no difference in select rate for Prior Service soldiers with 24 months or less versus more than 24 months of separation.

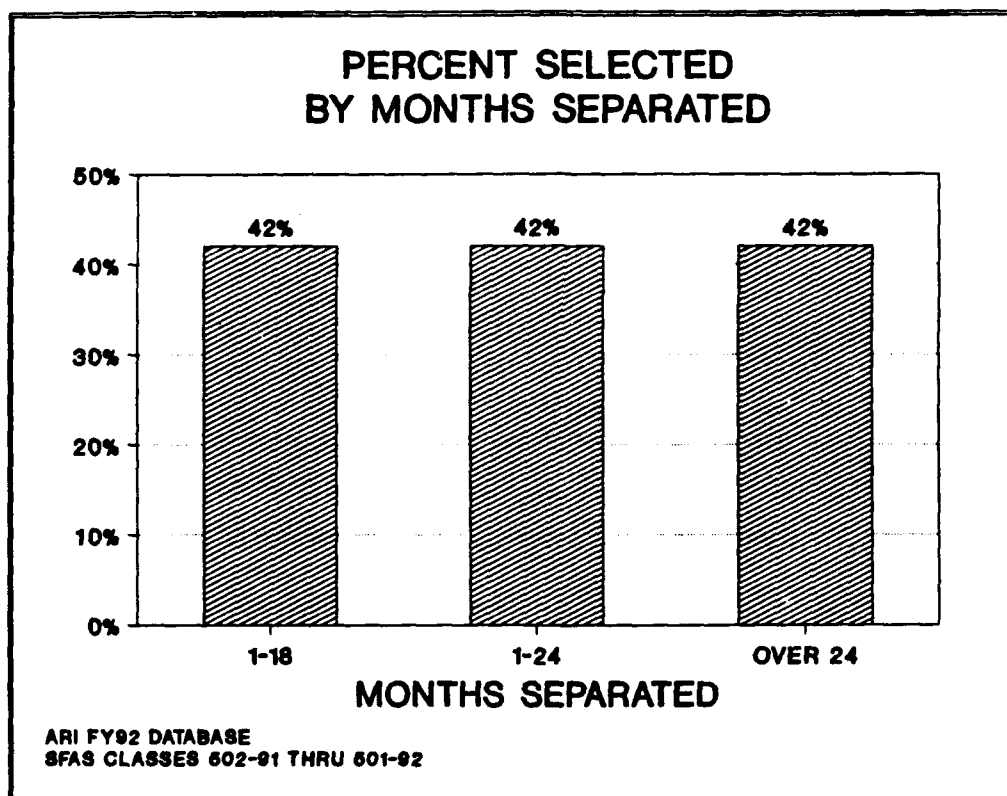


Figure 11. Percent of Prior Service selected by months separated (SFAS classes 502-91 through 501-92, enlisted only).

**Proposed Restrictions.** The last analyses were meant to assess the impact of each restriction on select rates and number of qualified candidates available by showing the results when CMF 31 and CMF 91 soldiers are excluded and when they are included. Figure 12 shows that for all Prior Service candidates, the overall select rate was 42%. When we excluded Air Force and Navy candidates, the select rate remained unchanged. This is not surprising, since Air Force and Navy candidates were a small proportion of the sample. When the combat arms restriction was applied, however, the select rate rose to 50%, reflecting the generally higher performance of soldiers with prior combat arms experience. The addition of the 24-month criterion actually led to a decline in the select rate to 48%.

As shown, when we included CMF 31 and CMF 91 soldiers, the major finding was a drop in the select rate from 50% to 46% when the combat arms restriction was applied. This is explained primarily by the low select rate (22%) observed for CMF 91. However, as noted earlier, our sample of CMF 91 soldiers is small and not necessarily representative of the Prior Service soldiers with medical experience.

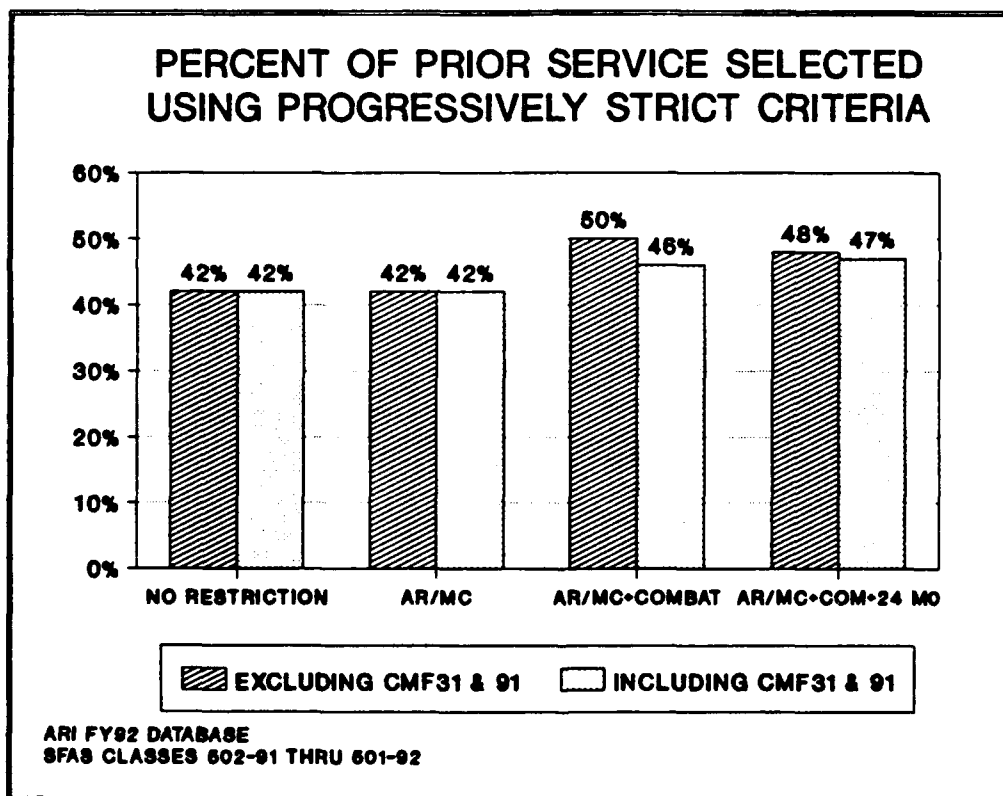


Figure 12. Percent of Prior Service selected using progressively strict criteria (SFAS classes 502-91 through 501-92, enlisted only).

The impact of the three restrictions on the number of qualified candidates was quite dramatic. By including only Army and Marine candidates, we eliminated only 28 soldiers (i.e., we retained nearly 91% of the sample). However, the requirement for combat arms, CMF 31, or CMF 91 experience eliminated another 97 soldiers, leaving us with 59% of the original sample. When we added the separation interval restriction (i.e., separated from active duty within the last two years), the number of qualified candidates fell to 102 or about one third of the original sample.<sup>3</sup>

Table 4 shows the result in terms of the number of eligible candidates and the number of selectees associated with each hypothesized condition. As each new restriction is imposed, both the potential market and the number selected are substantially reduced. Thus, although fewer candidates would be assessed, there would also be far fewer graduates.

Table 4

Hypothetical Impact of Proposed Restrictions on Prior Service Market and Number of Prior Service Selectees (SFAS Classes 502-91 Through 501-92, Enlisted Only)

<u>CONDITION</u>	<u>NUMBER ELIGIBLE</u>	<u>NUMBER SELECTED</u>
Current (no restrictions)	307	129
Only Army/Marine	279	117
Only Army/Marine with Combat Arms or CMF31/91	182	84
Only Army/Marine with Combat Arms and 2 years or less separation <sup>4</sup>	102-121	48-57

<sup>3</sup>Nineteen soldiers were not included because their data on separation interval were missing. If all 19 met the 24-month criterion and were added in, the resulting group size would still be only 121 or about 39% of the original sample.

<sup>4</sup>The exact number cannot be determined, because 19 soldiers had missing data on separation interval. There were at least 102 and as many as 121. The number selected is estimated to be between 48 and 57.

## Discussion

The first research question addressed how well Prior Service soldiers compared with Active Duty and National Guard/Reserve on background characteristics and performance in SFAS. The data showed that the groups were nearly identical on background characteristics. The only exception was that Prior Service soldiers were slightly less likely to be Ranger-qualified, a characteristic that tends to favor SF selection (Brooks, 1991). The Prior Service select rate was lower than that of Active Duty but higher than that of National Guard/Reserve.

The greatest difference appeared in the prerequisite failure rates. The Prior Service prerequisite failure rate was the highest of the three groups and nearly twice that of Active Duty soldiers. This weakness was largely due to the number of Prior Service swim test failures, which was at least double that of Active Duty and of National Guard/Reserve. This result may be partly explained by the fact that Prior Service soldiers are not required to take a swim test before SFAS. Their swim failures might be reduced by requiring swim tests and adequate swim training opportunities before the start of SFAS.

Since the select rates were based on the total number of candidates (including prerequisite drops), the Prior Service select rate is somewhat more impressive than it seems at first glance. Although their prerequisite failure rate was nine percentage points higher than the rate for Active Duty, their select rate was only two percentage points lower. Thus Prior Service soldiers who passed the prerequisite tests performed relatively well in SFAS.

The second research question focused on the impact of specific restrictions that USAJFKSWCS and USAREC have proposed to limit 18X Program eligibility. The proposed restrictions were designed to limit the participation of Air Force and Navy soldiers, those without combat arms experience, and those separated from Active Duty for more than two years. The most important finding was that these restrictions could have a dramatic impact on the number of potential Prior Service candidates and thus on the number of graduates. When we applied all three of the restrictions to our sample, nearly two thirds of all Prior Service candidates were eliminated. Thus, decisions about these restrictions should consider SF requirements for number of graduates as well as the potential for higher quality SF candidates.

The proposed restrictions would not appreciably increase the likelihood of success in SFAS except for the combat arms restriction. The Army/Marine data showed that selection was indeed more likely for soldiers with combat arms experience. Previous analyses (e.g., Brooks, 1991) have shown that Active

Duty soldiers with combat arms experience are more likely to be selected. Not surprisingly, the finding seems to generalize to Prior Service soldiers as well. The data did not support restrictions on Air Force or Navy candidates or on men separated from Active Duty for more than two years.

While the findings cited in this report can support policy decisions aimed at the Prior Service Program, other questions remain to be answered. One question is whether Prior Service SFAS graduates are worth the administrative burden and other costs of the program. Another question is whether USAREC could attain its known and anticipated future missions with nearly two-thirds of the Prior Service market eliminated by the proposed restrictions. Finally, would the proposed restrictions increase the likelihood of success in the SF qualification course? When answers to these questions are determined, policy makers will be able to make highly informed decisions about the future of the Prior Service Program.



### References

- Brooks, J. E. (1991). A research needs analysis for U.S. Army Special Operations Forces: Interim report (ARI Research Report 1600). Alexandria, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. (AD B160 125)
- Herd, A. M., & Teplitzky, M. L. (1992). Special Forces recruiting: An overview of current procedures and issues (ARI Research Report 1626). Alexandria, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. (AD A257 031)

**APPENDIX A**  
**Prior Service Inprocessing Form**

**A-1**

SFAS INPROCESSING FORM FOR PRIOR SERVICE

RANK \_\_\_\_\_ ARRIVAL DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
AGE \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SSN \_\_\_\_\_ MARITAL STATUS \_\_\_\_\_

NEXT OF KIN AND RELATION \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

FORMER RANK \_\_\_\_\_ FORMER PRIMARY MOS \_\_\_\_\_ FORMER ALT MOS \_\_\_\_\_

FORMER BRANCH OF SERVICE \_\_\_\_\_

1. HOW MANY YEARS OF SERVICE DID YOU COMPLETE BEFORE YOU SEPARATED?
2. LIST ALL UNITS YOU WERE ASSIGNED TO WHILE IN MILITARY SERVICE.
3. LIST ALL CIVILIAN JOBS HELD SINCE YOU WERE SEPARATED FROM THE MILITARY.
4. LIST ALL MILITARY SCHOOLS YOU HAVE ATTENDED.
5. HOW LONG WERE YOU OUT OF THE MILITARY?
6. WHAT PROBLEMS DID YOU ENCOUNTER WHEN YOU CAME BACK INTO THE ARMY?

7. WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO COME BACK INTO THE ARMY?

8. WHY DID YOU SPECIFICALLY ELECT TO JOIN SPECIAL FORCES?

9. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PRESENT PHYSICAL CONDITION?  
A. Excellent B. Good C. Poor

10. DID YOU RECEIVE AND FOLLOW THE 5 WEEK TRAINING PROGRAM FOR SFAS?

11. WHERE ARE YOUR DEPENDENTS NOW?

12. WHY DID YOU LEAVE THE MILITARY?

13. ARE YOU RANGER QUALIFIED?

14. DO YOU SPEAK ANOTHER LANGUAGE, IF SO WHAT?

15. WHERE DID YOU LEARN THIS LANGUAGE?